



NATURAL CURE
FOR
SPIRITUAL DISEASE

A Guide into Buddhist Science

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu

Cover design inspired by 'Champ de mérites et de vertus,' a creation by Marc-Michel Loret

**Natural Cure
for
Spiritual Disease**
A Guide into Buddhist Science

by Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu

NATURAL CURE FOR SPIRITUAL DISEASE A Guide into Buddhist Science

by Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu

Translated from the Thai by Santikaro Bhikkhu

Originally published in mimeograph by The Dhammadāna Foundation, 1986

First electronic edition, 1997

This new electronic edition, 2017

© Liberation Park

Any reproduction, in whole or part, in any form, for sale, profit, or material gain, is prohibited, except for quotations in reviews or articles. Permission to reprint for free distribution may be obtained from:

Liberation Park

PO Box 205

Norwalk, WI 54648, USA

books@liberationpark.org

www.liberationpark.org

Published by The Buddhadāsa Indapañño Archives

Buddhadāsa Indapañño Archives

Vachirabenjatas Park (Rot Fai Park) Nikom Rot Fai Sai 2 Rd.,
Chatuchak, Bangkok, 10900 Thailand

Tel. +66 2936 2800 Fax. +66 2936 2900

www.bia.or.th

for free distribution only



Anumodanā

To all Dhamma Comrades, those helping to spread Dhamma:

Break out the funds to spread Dhamma to let Faithful Trust flow,
Broadcast majestic Dhamma to radiate long-living joy.

Release unexcelled Dhamma to tap the spring of Virtue,
Let safely peaceful delight flow like a cool mountain stream.

Dhamma leaves of many years sprouting anew, reaching out,
To unfold and bloom in the Dhamma Centers of all towns.

To spread lustrous Dhamma and in hearts glorified plant it,
Before long, weeds of sorrow, pain, and affliction will flee.

As Virtue revives and resounds throughout Thai society,
All hearts feel certain love toward those born, aging, and dying.

Congratulations and Blessings to all Dhamma Comrades,
You who share Dhamma to widen the people's prosperous joy.

Heartiest appreciation from Buddhadāsa Indapañño,
Buddhist Science ever shines beams of Bodhi long-lasting.

In grateful service, fruits of merit and wholesome successes,
Are all devoted in honor to Lord Father Buddha.

Thus may the Thai people be renowned for their Virtue,
May perfect success through Buddhist Science awaken their hearts.

May the King and His Family live long in triumphant strength,
May joy long endure throughout this our word upon earth.

from

Buddhadāsa Indapañño

Mokkhabalārāma

Chaiya, 2 November 2530

Foreword

Buddha-Dhamma is as vast as the universe and as concise as a moment's flash of insight. Many sentient beings have gotten lost between the two, unable to resolve through direct personal experience the many teachings available today. Fundamental perspectives are required for us to begin sorting out the multiplicity of experiences and concepts. Here, we offer a clear, direct, and practical guide into the essentials of Buddhism, that is, Dhamma.

While many Buddhists take Dhamma to be 'the Buddha's teaching,' it really means 'natural truth' or 'natural law.' Of course, this is what the Buddha taught and demonstrated, but we must be careful to distinguish the teaching from reality itself. Thus, to understand Buddhism one must begin with Dhamma.

This guide examines the three inter-related aspects of Dhamma and pinpoints the key elements in each. Although Dhamma is One, we interact with it in three basic ways: study (*pariyatti-dhamma*), practice (*paṭipatti-dhamma*), and realization (*paṭivedha-dhamma*). Dhamma study is finding the right perspective on our human predicament and what we must do about it. Dhamma practice is developing and correctly applying the basic tools needed for spiritual survival. Dhamma realization is reaping the benefits that occur naturally with correct practice. Each aspect can be approached in many ways. Here, Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu approaches each in a direct and practical way.

Ajahn Buddhādāsa conceived of these talks as an introduction to the study, practice, and realization of Buddha-Dhamma. Here, he emphasizes that practice is the key. Nonetheless, without sufficient and correct study, one cannot

practice properly. And without realization or the fruition of the rightful benefits of practice, everything is wasted. In short, we cannot have one without the others. We must have all three elements of this trio and they must be fully integrated through practice.

This guide is translated from the first series of talks given by Ajahn Buddhādāsa to foreign meditators attending the monthly courses at Suan Mokkh. It is intended for Western Dhamma friends, including those who are new to Buddhist understanding and practice. We hope that the perspectives offered here will help new students of Buddhism to get their bearings straight from the start. Those who have studied and practiced Buddhism for some time, no matter what the school or approach, should also find this guide helpful. We can never be too clear what Dhamma and Dhamma practice is about. Many have gotten lost for lack of clarity and a good guide.

Ajahn Buddhādāsa is keen to foster ‘mutual good understanding among religions.’ This translation should contribute to that effort by clarifying what exactly Buddhism is about. Many non-Buddhist visitors to Asia have trouble separating the local culture from the Buddhist teachings about Dhamma. We hope that non-Buddhists who read this may understand the true nature of our religion. Then ‘dialogues’ will have honest and worthy foundations. It does nobody any good to compare (or criticize) the best of one path with the misuses of another. We must offer each other what is best from each of our paths and then understand and appreciate each other. In this way, all religions may work together to combat our common enemy – selfishness.

We hope that this little book will enable you to start your practice of Dhamma on the right foot. Confusion about what practice really is, meditating for the wrong reasons, inability to integrate meditation with daily life, and uncertainty about where

practice actually leads all wreak havoc on the spiritual lives of both ‘beginners’ and ‘old hands’ alike. The Buddha stressed the need for ‘right understanding’ (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), which is not a particular dogma or acceptance of some doctrine. Rather, it is an attitude of alert and joyful investigation of life characterized by the four noble truths. These ennobling realities are not to be believed or accepted; they are to be reflected upon and scrutinized until we have mined them for all they are worth. May we all find in this life the inner knowing which frees us from any doubt as to what is true and what is not, without having to defend or proselytize that understanding.

May all beings be free

Santikaro Bhikkhu
Suan Mokkhabalārāma
November 1991

Foreword to Present Edition

It is a delight to revisit and gently edit one of the first teachings I translated, first orally and then written, for Venerable Ajahn Buddhādāsa. These Dhamma pointings remain direct and clear, focused on core principles and issues. Rereading them is more poignant than ever, as I sit with my biological father as he is dying of metastasized cancer and accompany my family in learning with this important life transition. Concurrently, I reflect back on Ajahn Buddhādāsa's own biological death twenty-three years ago. The true Buddhādāsa lives on in these words and in all hearts that take them in. May we all share this living Dhamma with our loved ones, colleagues, opponents, and other beings we impact. Needless to say, such sharing is expressed more through how we respond to life's realities and challenges than in our stories and explanations.

In this new edition, we've adjusted wording and punctuation here and there but nothing substantial. Glossary entries have been updated as my understanding of Ajahn Buddhādāsa's understanding has deepened since the first edition.

Santikaro Upāsaka
Liberation Park
December 2016

Editors' Notes

These talks were originally transcribed and translated in 1986 for the one and only edition of the “Suan Mokkh International Newsletter” (superseded by *Evolution/Liberation*). There were only 350 copies of this mimeographed publication, which went out of print quickly. A few years later, it appeared at www.suanmokkh.org. We have here made some adjustments to that original translation, and hope that it now reads more smoothly and clearly.

Most Dhamma talks in Thai, and especially those of Ajahn Buddhādāsa, are full of Pāli terms (Pāli is the primary textual language of early Buddhism). These terms have found their way, along with many Sanskrit words, into Thai and are familiar to all practicing Buddhists. They are rich and precise words that express concepts and perspectives not always as clear in English. We have tried not to overdo the use of Pāli terms here, although Ajahn Buddhādāsa asks students to become familiar with them. When possible, we have used an English equivalent. When there is no English word which captures the full meaning of the Pāli term, it is left in Pāli and explained parenthetically and in footnotes. Words requiring longer explanations can be found in the glossary, which you may want to rummage through in order to acquaint yourself with these important terms.

All footnotes are provided by the translator.

Finally, thanks to the friends who helped bring this book to print. For the original publication these are Steve Schmidt, Daniel Kalish, David Olsson, Sister Dhammadinna, Maechi Nandini

(Wendy McCrae), the Venerable Dusadee Metamkuro, and the Dhamma Study & Practice Group. Scott Oser took care of the first html edition. The present edition was coordinated through the Buddhadāsa Indapañño Archives's volunteers Kittisak, Paco, Juree, Cindy, and Marc-Michel. May their efforts help more people to live with less *dukkha* and nurture greater peace in this world.

The Editors

Contents

Foreword	vi
Foreword to Present Edition	ix
Editors' Notes	x
I. A Scientific Cure for Spiritual Disease	1
II. The Use of Dhamma	15
III. New Life	28
Afterword	42
Glossary	43
About the Author	52
About the Translator	53
Recommended Reading & Online Resources	54

I

A Scientific Cure for Spiritual Disease: *Your Study of Dhamma*

(3 February 1986)

To begin, I would like to express my joy that you have come here to study Dhamma (natural truth). Second, I would like to thank each of you for helping to make Suan Mokkh a useful and worthwhile place.

Today, I would like to talk with you concerning the question: What benefits will we receive from studying Dhamma? If you get any benefits from Buddhism, you will become a Buddhist automatically, whether or not you go through a conversion ceremony. To convert or not to convert is a meaningless issue. The relevant issue, the important thing, is whether you will get anything useful from Buddhism.

So we will talk about the things that you will gain from Buddhism. Only after realizing that Buddhism has benefited you will you know what Buddhism is about. Until you understand what it is that you have received, you can't really know anything about Buddhism. Let's discuss, then, the things that you will obtain from Buddhism. Thus, you will understand Buddhism and will become a Buddhist automatically.

I would like to say that you will get the best, the highest thing that a human being ought to get. There is nothing more worth getting than this; it surpasses everything. We might call this thing, simply, ‘new life.’ Consequently, the best thing to do here is to talk about the characteristics of new life.

Now, for you to understand what is going to be said, I ask you to forget everything. Please forget all the faiths, creeds, and beliefs which you have ever held. Put them all aside for the time being. Even if you prefer to believe in scientific principles more than any of the so-called religions, leave them completely alone for now. Make the mind empty, free, and spotless, so that you can hear something new. Actually, Buddhism shares many characteristics and principles with science, but Buddhism is a science of the mind-heart rather than a science of physical things.¹ Buddhism is a spiritual science. For this reason, it may be something new for you.

Dhamma Medicine

The first thing we would like you to realize is that Buddhism, or Dhamma, is a medicine for curing disease. This is a strange and special medicine because it can be taken by anyone, regardless of religion, nationality, ethnic background, education, class, or language. Anyone may use this medicine, for Dhamma is like those modern drugs that cure physical ailments. Such drugs can be taken by people all over the world, no matter what their religion, race, sex, profession, or language. Although we come from different cultures, we can use the very same kinds of medicine. Take aspirin, for example. No matter who and where we are, we can take a few aspirin to get rid of a headache. Dhamma is the

¹ In Buddhist terminology, there is no real distinction made between heart and mind. The intellect and the emotions are not seen as being polar opposites. Rather, it is all *citta*, which can be translated ‘mind,’ ‘heart,’ ‘mind-heart,’ or ‘psyche.’ We use these terms as synonyms.

same. It is the universal medicine.

We like to say that Dhamma is a medicine for disease (*rogā*). I would like for us to use this Pāli word ‘rogā,’ because it has a clear and useful meaning. Although it’s usually translated as ‘disease,’ *rogā* literally means ‘that which pierces and stabs,’ thus causing pain. We don’t really know where the English word ‘disease’ comes from, so we prefer ‘rogā.’ Its meaning is certain and appropriate: stabbing, piercing, skewering. Dhamma is something that can cure the stabbing and piercing of *rogā*.

The *rogā* with which we’re most concerned is spiritual. We can call it ‘spiritual disease.’ Physical disease pierces the body; spiritual disease stabs the mind or spirit. Dhamma is the latter’s remedy. If we have no spiritual disease, to come and study Dhamma is a complete waste of time. Hence, everyone must look closely in order to know both kinds of *rogā*: physical disease, *rogā* of the body, and spiritual disease, *rogā* of the mind, heart, or spirit. Then look within yourselves right now, is there any spiritual disease in you? Are you free from disease or merely enduring it?

We begin our study of Dhamma by getting to know our own *rogā*. You must look and search within yourself until you see and discover how spiritual disease afflicts you. To do so, you must look inside. If you don’t, you won’t make a proper beginning to your study of Dhamma. Unless we understand the *rogā* from which we suffer, we will only study Dhamma in a foolish, aimless way. Actually, most of you already have some knowledge about your spiritual disease; however, for many of you that knowledge will be slight, scattered, or unclear.

Let’s talk about the disease a bit more in order to clarify it. All of the problems that disturb the mind are problems that arise from aging, illness, and death. These are the first symptoms of the disease. Our minds are disturbed and pestered by problems that result from the fact that we all must grow old, fall sick, and

die. These problems are the first thing to look at. Next, there are three general, miscellaneous problems: we get separated from the things we love, we experience things we dislike, and we have wishes which go unfulfilled. These are general problems leading to spiritual disease. Before anything else, each of you must know these problems or rogā as you actually experience them within yourselves.

Look Within

This is why there is the principle that Dhamma must be studied and learned internally, rather than externally. We must learn from life itself. Learn from all the things that you experience within this fathom-long body. Please be certain to learn inside only, and don't bother learning outside. The things that we learn from external sources, such as books and talks, are never enough. Only by looking within can we come to understand these spiritual diseases completely. The external kind of study and learning, such as reading books, discussion, and listening to talks as you are doing now, can do no more than explain the method and means of inner study. Such external study only teaches us how to go about the inner study. Then, you must go and do that inner study in order to understand Dhamma.

I ask all of you to begin your studies from within by studying the problems that you inwardly experience. Please take a look at the problems that arise from aging, sickness, and death. We are afraid of aging, falling sick, and dying; all kinds of problems on many different levels arise from them. We must clearly observe these things in the same way that a geologist examines a rock, as when we take up something with our own hand, hold it up to the light, and carefully examine it until we see it clearly in all its detail. In the same way, we must clearly see the problems that arise from our own aging, illness, and death. Further, we must

investigate the problems that develop out of them, such as being separated from beloved things, encountering unloved things, and desiring things but not getting them.

The result of all of the above problems is *dukkha* (distress, hurt, misery), both physical and mental. The symptoms and conditions of *dukkha* are many and varied. It comes in many forms: sorrow, sadness, dissatisfaction, grief, lamentation, tears, frustration, pain, upset, agony, and more. There are Pāli terms for all of these, but what we call them isn't important. We needn't know all of their names, yet we ought to know how these things really feel when we experience them. To begin with, you must know them inside yourselves. All of these are *rogā*, the symptoms of *rogā*, and the results of the *rogā* which we have caught.

Dhamma is the medicine for *rogā* (spiritual disease); thus, the matter we're discussing here is a matter of the mind and spirit. The Buddha was one who came to know this disease, found a cure for it, and used the cure in order to free himself from disease. After doing so, the Buddha was then able to teach us about the *rogā*, its cure, and the way to administer the cure. Please understand Buddha in this way. If you are afflicted by spiritual disease, you ought to be interested in his Dhamma.² However, if any one of you is completely free of spiritual disease, you are wasting time on Dhamma – you can go home. I repeat, anyone who has no spiritual disease is invited to leave.

Developing the Cure

Now let's talk about studying Dhamma, which is the medicine that cures spiritual disease. There are many stages and levels to Dhamma. We begin by studying, as we do with any ordinary

² Here, Dhamma is both natural truth and the knowledge of natural truth which enables us to end the disease, that is, *dukkha*.

subject.³ Maybe we have no real understanding of Dhamma at the start. Although we have read many books and listened to talks, we don't really know Dhamma. We study in order to know, then we have knowledge. Once we have some knowledge, it must be used. In short, for it to be worthwhile, we must know Dhamma, until we have Dhamma, and then use Dhamma.

Let's go through these three things again. Even though we may have read about and studied Dhamma a great deal, although we may have much knowledge of it, we may not have the right kind of knowledge. This means we don't really have Dhamma. If it isn't the correct knowledge, we won't be able to use it. Thus, we need to study until we have a sufficient amount of the right knowledge. Otherwise we won't be able to use it. Please investigate this fact thoroughly. Therefore, we must have Dhamma, and we must have correct and sufficient understanding of Dhamma. But having the right knowledge isn't enough; we must have a sufficiently large amount of this correct knowledge and it must be very quick. If it isn't quick, it is never on time and in the place where it is needed. We must be agile and expert in the use of Dhamma.

Simply having this knowledge somewhere in the back of our minds doesn't cure the spiritual disease. We must be expert in it; we need to be skillful in its proper use. We need to be deft, agile, and expert, so that we are able to understand the spiritual disease that is already present, as well as any new spiritual disease that may arise. If we have this understanding, it is a good start in becoming able to use Dhamma to cure our disease. So study the disease within yourselves. This is the kind of knowledge that you must develop.

³ Here, study is not just intellectual learning. It involves thinking, investigation, training, experimentation, and direct experience, with emphasis on the training and experience.

Just One Teaching

You must know that Buddha spoke of just one thing and nothing else: *dukkha* (distress, dissatisfaction, suffering) and the quenching of *dukkha*. Buddha taught about only the disease and the cure of the disease; he didn't talk about anything else. When people asked questions about other matters, Buddha refused to waste his or their time with such things. Nowadays, we spend our time studying all kinds of other things. It's a pity how our curiosity is aroused by matters such as: After death, will I be born again? Where will I be reborn? How will it happen? Please don't waste your time on those things. Instead of reading lots of books, take what time you have to focus on *dukkha* and the complete, utter quenching of *dukkha*. This is the knowledge to store up, this is the studying to do. Don't bother studying anything else!

Buddha taught only *dukkha* and the total cessation of *dukkha*. He taught that we must study these two things within our bodies. You can only do this while the body is alive. Once the body dies, you don't have to concern yourselves with this problem any further. But now, while there's life, constantly, continuously, and inwardly study *dukkha* (spiritual disease) and the utter quenching of *dukkha* (the cure of the spiritual disease).

Throughout this world there is little interest in this matter of *dukkha* and its end. None of the world's schools pay any attention to it. In the universities, they don't teach or study it. The only thing taught in our schools and universities is cleverness, the storing up of many facts and the ability to perform mental tricks with them. Students graduate with cleverness and some way to make a living. This is what modern education means – being clever and earning lots of money. *Dukkha* and the quenching of *dukkha* are totally ignored. We believe that all education in today's world is incomplete. It is imperfect because the most important subjects are forgotten; a general base of knowledge and the ability to earn

a living are not enough. There is a third area of knowledge that the schools and universities don't teach: how to be a human being. Why do they ignore what it takes to be a proper human being, that is, a human being free of dukkha? A proper, well-rounded human being ought to have no spiritual disease, consequently modern education will be incomplete and insufficient as long as it fails to cure spiritual disease.

What Are Human Beings?

It is correct and proper that each of you has come here to undertake the third kind of education: how to be a human being without any problems, how to be free of dukkha. It is good that you have come here and are interested in this topic. In short, use this opportunity to learn what it takes to be a human being.

If someone tells you that you're not yet human, please don't get angry and please don't feel sad. First, you must look and see what it means to be human. So let's take a look at '*manussa*,' the Pāli word for human being. This is a very good word for it has a very useful meaning. Manussa means 'lofty-minded one,' a mind high enough to be above all problems. Problems are like flood waters, but they can't flood the lofty mind. When one's mind is elevated to a high level, we can say that one is a manussa. The speaker isn't sure where the English word 'human being' comes from. Our guess is that it must mean 'high-minded,' also. *Man* is probably related to *mana* (mind) and *hu* ought to mean 'high.' So human ought to mean 'high-minded.'

Dhamma is the knowledge which tells us exactly what it means to be human. We're interested in what it is to be fully human, rather than merely masquerading in 'human' bodies. To be truly human is to be above all problems. Study and learn in order to be completely human. Study, practice, and work to develop a mind, heart and spirit that is above all problems. By problems,

we mean dukkha, the thing that, if it arises, we cannot tolerate or endure. When it occurs, we can't stand it and struggle to get away from it. This causes agitation, discomfort, unhappiness, and unhealthiness. Dukkha, our problem, means 'unbearableness, intolerableness.' We can't stand it; we can't put up with it.

Once again, let me repeat that if you have no problems you can go home. You need not waste your time studying Dhamma. However, if you happen to have some problems, just one little problem, or perhaps many, then take a good look at them. Stick around and learn how to look at problems.

I dare say that every one of you has a problem, and further, that you all have the same problem. This one problem that bothers us all is the thing we discussed above. It is the problem that arises out of aging, illness, and death. In short, we don't get the things that we want. We can't maintain this body forever. Life is never exactly what we want it to be; we can't have things our way all of the time. This problem is shared by each and every one of us.

Scientific Approach

We are all in a situation where we must use a scientific method to solve our problem. We must use a specifically scientific approach because the methods of philosophy and logic can't solve the problem.⁴ There are myriad philosophies concerning everything imaginable, but none of them can solve our problem. Philosophies are very popular with people in today's world; they are fun and interesting, but they don't work. This is why we must turn to a scientific method which can and will solve the problem.

It is now time to recall something about which you've

⁴ Ajahn Buddhādāsa makes a clear distinction between philosophy and science, as he understands the two terms. By the former he meant mere theoretical speculation devoid of practical application, while the latter can be directly experienced and personally verified through practice. In short, the difference between mere thinking and wisdom.

probably already heard: the four noble truths (*ariya-sacca*). Please reflect upon this most important matter. The four noble truths are Buddhism's scientific principles of mind. The four noble truths allow us to study the specific problem exactly as it is, without relying on any hypothesis. Most of you are familiar with the standard scientific method in which a hypothesis is proposed, then tested through experimentation. Such hypotheses are merely forms of guessing and estimation. With the *ariya-sacca* such clumsiness isn't necessary. Reality is experienced and examined directly, rather than through the limitations of hypothesis, predictions, and guesstimations.

What, then, are the four noble truths that you must look into? They are:

1) dukkha; 2) the cause of dukkha; 3) the quenching of dukkha, through quenching its cause; 4) the way or path that quenches dukkha by ending its cause.

These are the *ariya-sacca*. They have the features of science, the reasoning of science, and the methodology of science. In short, we apply these truths to real things as they actually happen in life, without using any hypotheses.

Merely reading books won't enable you to do this science. Books lead to more hypotheses, ideas, and opinions. Even in a book about Buddhism, the four noble truths become just more hypotheses. Such is not science. It is only philosophy, which is always inviting us to play around with hypotheses. So we often get stuck in endless circles of suppositions, propositions, and arguments. There is no true Dhamma in that; the reality of actually quenched dukkha is lacking.

The Real Thing

If we want to be scientific about it, practice with the real thing and forget the hypotheses. Study the real thing itself: study dukkha as

you experience it. Look at the cause of dukkha by experiencing that cause. Observe through direct personal experience the other side of the coin – the end of dukkha. Lastly, investigate what you must do to end dukkha. This approach is scientific. For as long as you aren't doing this, you're doing philosophy. You'll only have a philosophical Buddhism. Don't get stuck in views and theories. Look inside, study inside yourselves, see these truths as they actually happen. By merely playing around with ideas about Buddhism, you will never find the real thing.

If you study Buddhism from books only, no matter what your sources, or how you study, in the end you'll always come away with the feeling that Buddhism is a philosophy. This is because the authors of most books on Buddhism approach it as a philosophy. They actually believe that Buddhism is a philosophy, which is totally wrong.

Forget About Philosophy

Regarding this idea that Buddhism is a philosophy, put it aside and lock it up in a drawer. In its place, practice by studying directly in the mind, as they happen, dukkha, the cause of dukkha, the end of dukkha, and the way that leads to the end of dukkha. Study these until you experience the quenching of actual dukkha. As soon as you experience this, you'll know that Buddhism is no philosophy.

You will know instantly that Buddhism is a science. It has the structure, principles, and spirit of science, not of philosophy. At the same time, you'll see that it is a religion, one with its own particular character, that is, a religion entirely compatible with modern science. Everything that is truly understood by science is acceptable to Buddhism, the religion which is a science of mind and spirit. Please understand Buddhism in this way.

You may be one of the many who believe that a religion must have a God and that anything without a God can't be a

religion. Most people believe that a religion must have at least one God, if not many. Such understanding is not correct. A wiser view is that there are two kinds of religion: theistic and non-theistic. Theistic religions postulate a God as the highest thing and consider belief in that God to be all-important. Consider Buddhism to be non-theistic, for it doesn't postulate any belief in a personal God. Buddhism, however, has an impersonal God, that is the truth (*sacca*) of nature according to scientific principles. This truth is the highest thing in Buddhism, equivalent to the God or gods of theistic religions.

You should study the word 'religion'; it doesn't mean 'to believe in God.' If you look up this word in a good dictionary, you'll see that it comes from the Latin *religare*, which means 'to observe and to bind with the Supreme Thing.' Ancient grammarians once thought that *religare* came from the root *lig*, to observe. Thus, religion was "a system of observance that led to the final goal of humanity." Later scholars considered that it came from the root *leg*, to bind. Then religion became "the thing that binds human beings to the Supreme Thing (God)." Finally, both meanings were combined and religion was understood to be "the system of observance (practice) that binds human beings to the Supreme Thing." The Supreme Thing needn't be called 'God.' If, however, you insist on calling it 'God,' then recognize that 'God' can have two meanings: personal God and non-personal God.

The Buddhist God

If you prefer to call it 'God,' you should understand that Buddhism has the law of nature as its God. The law of nature – for example, the law of *idappaccayatā*, which is the law of conditionality – is the Buddhist God. *Idappaccayatā* means:

*With this as condition, this is; because this arises, this arises. Without this as condition, this is not; because this ceases, this ceases.*⁵

This is the Supreme Thing in Buddhism; this law of nature is the Buddhist God. In Buddhism there isn't a personal God; its God – the law of nature – is a non-personal God. Because Buddhism, in fact, has a God, it is a religion.

Many Western writers and scholars of Buddhism say that it isn't a religion, since it has no God. Thus, they make a terrible blunder, not knowing anything about the non-personal God. If they knew of it, they would see that it is more real and true than any personal God. Then, they wouldn't write that Buddhism isn't a religion. They would write that Buddhism is another kind of religion. Religions with personal gods are one kind of religion, while Buddhism is the other kind, the kind with an impersonal God.

Most religions believe in a Creator, usually an individualistic God with a personality. The Buddhist Creator is impersonal. This non-personal God, the law of Dhamma or nature, is the law of *idappaccayatā*:

*Because this is, so this is. Because this is, thus this is.
Because this is, so this is.*

This is the law of conditionality, the natural evolutionary process of this causing this which in turn causes this and so on in endless concocting. Buddhism has a Creator, but it is the non-personal God. If you are able to understand the difference between these two kinds of Gods – impersonal law of conditionality and personal Creator – it will be easy for you to realize what Buddhism is.

⁵ Some translators render these lines “*this ... that ...*,” but the Pāli original explicitly repeats “*this ... this ...*” We leave it to the reader to reflect why.

When things happen in this way, you'll realize that this matter of dukkha and its quenching happen according to the law of the impersonal God. Then you'll understand Dhamma correctly and live in harmony with Dhamma. You'll see it as science rather than mere philosophy. The distinction between science and philosophy will ensure that your study of Buddhism is correct and in line with Dhamma.

If you have this knowledge and use it, you have the medicine for curing spiritual disease. By taking this medicine, the heart is emancipated; it is saved, that is, freed from all dukkha. Every religion teaches emancipation; however, only Buddhism teaches freedom from all of the problems discussed above, in fact, from all problems. Thus, there is no problem or dukkha to dominate us; this is called 'emancipation.' We have been cured of all the diseases discussed above.

I hope that you understand the general principles, the meaning, and the genuine goal of Buddhism. If you do, you'll steadily solve your problems because your understanding will be correct from the start.

If you understand what has been said, you will proceed smoothly in the study and cure of spiritual disease. As time has run out, more details must wait until the next talk. Before closing, I would like to express my joy at the right action of all of you who have come to work on this problem of spiritual disease.

Once again, I thank you for helping to make Suan Mokkh a useful place.

II

The Use of Dhamma: *Your Practice of Dhamma* (February 6, 1986)

I'd like to express my happiness at this second opportunity to speak with you. Last time, we discussed what we will get from Buddhism, from Dhamma. This time, we'll discuss the successful use of Dhamma, that is, how to live with Dhamma.

When speaking about Dhamma, we mean the understanding that we must put into practice in order to cure spiritual disease. When speaking about this practice, there are four important things (*dhammas*) to be understood.⁶ These four things are *sati* (mindfulness, reflective awareness), *sampajañña* (ready comprehension, wisdom-in-action), *samādhi* (collectedness, concentration), and *paññā* (intuitive wisdom, insight). If you consider them carefully, you will find that you have fostered these four things through your practice of *ānāpānasati* (mindfulness with breathing).⁷ Now, we must discuss in detail how to use these four dhammas. We'll consider them one by one.

⁶ The most basic meaning of the word '*dhamma*' is 'thing' or 'phenomenon.' Here it has the sense of 'quality' or 'virtue.' You will find, however, that it has many meanings, levels, and ramifications. See the Glossary, for a start.

⁷ The system of meditation generally taught at Suan Mokkh. See *Mindfulness With Breathing*, by Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu (Wisdom Publications, Somerville, MA: 1996).

Sati

Sati (mindfulness, recollection) is the quick awareness and recall of the things which must be recalled. It must be as quick as an arrow. We also can describe *sati* as a vehicle or transport mechanism of the fastest kind. This most rapid transport doesn't carry material things, it carries wisdom and knowledge. *Sati* delivers *paññā* (wisdom) in time to meet our needs. Through the practice of mindfulness with breathing, *sati* is trained fully.

Sampajañña

The second *dhamma* is *sampajañña*. *Sampajañña* is wisdom as it meets up with and immediately confronts a problem, as it deals with and wipes out that problem – this is wisdom-in-action. It is only that wisdom specifically related and applied to a particular situation or event. Nonetheless, you may have come across a variety of translations for ‘*sampajañña*,’ which can be rather confusing. We recommend that you remember it as ‘wisdom-in-action.’ Even better, learn the Pāli word about which there is no doubt. The word ‘wisdom’ encompasses many meanings and understandings; we can't even begin to estimate its full content. However, the word ‘*sampajañña*’ is far more limited in its meaning. It is exactly that wisdom directly needed for the problem that confronts us now. Active wisdom isn't general; it is a matter of particulars.

The same holds for the word ‘Dhamma,’ which has an incredible variety of meanings, depending on how it is being used. When Dhamma is applied to solve a specific problem, event, or situation, there is a specific Dhamma particular to that situation. The meaning is limited to the occasion and its circumstances. In this case of Dhamma solving problems, the most precise and proper term is ‘*dhamma-sacca*’ (Dhamma-Truth). *Dhamma-sacca* is the particular Dhamma called for by the immediate situation

with which we must cope, be it the onset of spiritual disease or exposure to the germs of spiritual disease. It is the use of just the right thing in a specific incident or event.

We can compare Dhamma with the medicine chest in our house. In it we store a wide variety of drugs, pills, capsules, ointments, powders, and syrups for possible use. When we're actually sick, we must choose from among the many medicines the one that will be effective in treating our ailment. We can't take them all; we take just what is needed to cure our illness here and now. The same is true for Dhamma. Understand that there's an incredible amount of what we call 'Dhamma' and 'paññā,' but that we only apply a little bit at a time. We apply just that portion which can take care of the immediate situation. Know how to use the Dhamma, the paññā, which is exactly relevant to our situation and problem. The Dhamma or wisdom which controls that situation and problem is what we call 'sampajañña.'

Samādhi

The third *dhamma* of today's session is *samādhi*. This literally means 'well-established mind, properly-maintained mind, correctly-founded samādhi mind.' The Buddha gave the broadest possible meaning to samādhi when he defined it as "the single-focused mind (*ekaggatā-citta*) that has Nibbāna as its object."⁸

We can say that samādhi has three characteristics: *pārisuddhi* (purity), *samāhitā* (firmness, steadiness, stability), and *kammanīya* (activeness, readiness, workableness). Thus, when you want to know whether the mind is in a state of samādhi or not, examine it for these three qualities. See whether or not it is pure, stable, and active.

⁸ '*Ekaggatā-citta*' should not be confused with '*ekaggatā*.' Although both may be rendered 'one-pointedness,' they are used in different contexts. The latter term refers to a factor of *jhāna*. The former term refers to the 'mind with a single purpose or object.'

When we speak of the power or energy of samādhi, we mean the way the mind focusses all of its energy on a single issue. This is similar to the magnifying glass's ability to focus the sun's rays onto a single point so that a flame appears. Similarly, when the mind's power is collected into one focus, then it is 'one-pointed.' The mind that is samādhi produces a very powerful energy, which is stronger than any other kind of power. We can describe this highly concentrated mind in two ways. The first is *indriya*, which means 'sovereign' or 'chief.' The second is *bala*, which means 'power, force, strength.' Thus, we have *samādhi-indriya* and *samādhi-bala*, the mind that has sovereignty and is more powerful than any other thing.

Samādhi must work together with wisdom. Samādhi is like a knife's weight and paññā is like its sharpness. For a knife to cut anything properly, it must have two things: weight and sharpness. A knife that is heavy but dull, like a hammer, can't cut anything and only makes a mess. On the other hand, a very sharp knife that lacks weight, like a razor blade, likewise can't cut through whatever it is we must cut. A knife needs both properties; the mind is the same. To do what it needs to do the mind requires both samādhi and paññā. You might wonder what it is that cuts — is it the knife's weight or its sharpness? If you can understand this, it will be easier for you to understand how Dhamma cuts through problems, that is, mental defilements. In the moment of sampajañña's activity, both samādhi, and paññā are working together with the speed of sati to slice through the problem. They're interconnected and, in practice, can't be separated.

Paññā

There remains only the last *dhamma* to discuss: *paññā* (wisdom, intuitive knowledge, insight). The meaning of this word is broad and includes much. Literally, it means 'to know fully,' but not

everything that there is to know, only those things which should be known. Paññā is the full and adequate knowing of all things which ought to be known. Of all the things that we could know, paññā refers only to those things which we need to know, the knowledge which is able to solve our problems. For example, it isn't necessary to know about atomic nuclei or outer space. We only need to know what quenches *dukkha* (spiritual disease) directly in our mind.

That which we should know is solely a matter of the quenching of *dukkha*. This statement agrees with the Buddha who said that he says nothing about other matters, that he speaks only of *dukkha* and the end of *dukkha*. There is a beautiful, meaningful quotation in the Pāli which we'd like you to hear:

“Pubbe cāhaṃ bhikkhave, etarahi ca dukkhañceva
paññāpemi, dukkhassa ca nirodhaṃ.”

*Bhikkhus! In times past, as well as now, I speak only of
dukkha and the utter quenching of dukkha.*

(MN 22: Alaggadūpama sutta)

The Buddha didn't mention the future because it doesn't exist. As for the past and present, he taught only these two things.

Among the things we should know, we can talk of four important aspects of wisdom. The first topic I'd like to point out is the three characteristics of things (*tilakkhaṇa*): *aniccaṃ* (impermanence, change), *dukkhaṃ* (unsatisfactoriness), and *anattā* (not-self, selflessness). Detailed explanations of the three characteristics can be found in many different books. Today we will only summarize them.

Compounding

Aniccaṃ means that all compounded things are constantly changing. Please note that we're speaking only of created,

conditioned things. The un-compounded thing doesn't have the characteristic of *aniccam*. Impermanence only applies to things that are produced through causes and conditions. As this term 'compounded thing' is important, you would do well to learn the original Pāli term, '*saṅkhāra*.' *Saṅkhāra* means 'to form, to compound, to concoct, to condition,' that is, all the myriad things are constantly conditioning new things. This is a characteristic or activity of all phenomenal things, such as these trees around us. Different causes have come together in them. New things arise, there is growth and development, leaves grow and fall, there is ceaseless change. *Saṅkhāra* is this continuous activity of formation. Anything which is conditioned into existence is called '*saṅkhāra*.' That, in turn, conditions the arising of other things and those things are also called '*saṅkhāra*.' Thus *saṅkhāra* are both things conditioned and the things which condition, both the causes and results of conditioning.

We can compare this endless compounding of *saṅkhāra* with the bricks in a wall. Each brick props up another brick and that brick props up another, which props up other bricks, and so on through the successive layers of bricks. Each brick is supported by some of the bricks, while it supports other bricks; it relates to them both as supporter and supportee. Thus, *saṅkhāra* has three meanings, both verb and noun. The first meaning, the verb, is the activity of forming, compounding, concocting. The second meaning refers to the things conditioned by that activity, and the third refers to the causes and conditions of that activity. The meaning of *saṅkhāra* is as comprehensive as this.

Observe the activity of conditioning; you will see it in everything. Without this fact of things being continually formed and ceaselessly forming other things, there would be no existence or life. There can be life or existence only through this constant conditioning and reconditioning. Yet, sometimes this conditioning

is very subtle and we don't see it. It may even be hidden, as in a rock. There is perpetual conditioning happening within each rock, but when you look, your eyes may not detect it. Nevertheless, see the process of ceaseless conditioning in all things which exist.

The best approach is to see the conditioning within ourselves. It's all happening within our bodies. We can see the conditioning here, we can see the things as they are conditioned here, and we can see the things which make the conditioning. By looking within, we can see all this saṅkhāra. There's the conditioning of the body-aggregate (*rūpa-khandha*); the conditioning of the feeling-aggregate (*vedanā-khandha*); the conditioning of *saññā-khandha* (the aggregate of perceptions, recognitions, and classifications); the conditioning of the thinking-aggregate (*saṅkhāra-khandha*); and, lastly, the conditioning of the consciousness-aggregate (*viññāṇa-khandha*). These five important groups, or aggregates, of human experience and their constant conditioning can all be seen within our living bodies.

Contact Points

Examine the transmission or contact points: now the eyes work, now the ears work, now the nose works, now the tongue works, now the skin works, now the mind works. One-by-one they perform their duties and do their work. When one functions, in that moment there is saṅkhāra. This is when, where, and how the conditioning can be observed. In the body alone, there is ceaseless conditioning and constant change. The cells die and new ones form such that before long they've all been replaced. Even these physical aspects of life fully exhibit saṅkhāra for in this body there are the six internal sense organs: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. They meet up with their external objects: forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, and mental objects. When the sense organ interacts with the corresponding sense object – for example the

eyes see a form or the ears hear a sound – there is immediate conditioning. A form is seen, a sound is heard, or an odor is smelled. We call this ‘*phassa*’ (contact). It’s the starting point for conditioning; a series of further *saṅkhāra* arises from it. The meeting of sense organ and sense object (such as ears and sound, or mind and mental object) conditions *phassa*. *Phassa* conditions *vedanā* (feeling; the pleased and displeased mental reactions toward the sense experiences). *Vedanā* helps to condition *saññā*, because perceptions and recognitions arise through the influence of feelings. What is felt to be pleasant or painful is recognized and classified. *Saññā* then conditions various thoughts and thinking, including emotions (*saṅkhāra-khandha*). This leads to doing this and doing that. Then there are the results of the actions, which lead to further thinking, which lead to further action, and so it goes. This is one example of what we mean by ‘conditioning.’ We see that this sort of conditioning goes on constantly, even in our own bodies. It never stops, never takes a rest, never pauses. It continues whether we’re asleep or awake. This perpetual flux, this ceaseless flow, is the characteristic of *aniccam*.

Dukkha-ness

When we clearly see the characteristic of *aniccam*, it is easy to understand the second characteristic, *dukkham* – unsatisfactoriness, unbearableness, ugliness, worthlessness. If we want things to go our way according to our thoughts, we’ll experience *dukkha*. When things change from what we like or want, we feel *dukkha*. In fact, they never really are what we want, because they never stop changing long enough to really be something. Thus, we have the problem that unsatisfactoriness (*dukkham*) is endless. It’s so difficult to bear with all of this conditioning, amid all these shifting things. This is the characteristic of *dukkham*.

Looking closely, we see that we ourselves are impermanent,

painful, and unsatisfying. The things that we love, that satisfy us, are *aniccam* and *dukkham*. The things that we dislike are *aniccam* and *dukkha*. There is nothing among all this *saṅkhāra* which is *niccam* (permanent) and *adukkham* (satisfying, enduring). We must see *aniccam* and *dukkham* within ourselves in this way.

When we see impermanence completely, when we see unsatisfactoriness fully – clearly and obviously – then we automatically see that all those things are *anattā* (not-self). They aren't permanent selves that we can call 'me.' Amid all the change and conditioning, there is no individual entity or eternal substance that can properly be called 'self.' Everything is *anattā* or not-self. Things exist; we are not saying they don't. What is, is; but everything that is, is not-self. We shouldn't misunderstand and think that we have a self (*attā*). There is only the flow of change. All this is the understanding or *paññā* regarding *aniccam*, *dukkham*, and *anattā*.

Voidness

The second topic is the understanding (*paññā*) regarding *suññatā* (voidness, emptiness). When we see the three characteristics of *aniccam*, *dukkham*, and *anattā*, when we realize that all things are not-self, then we understand that everything is void of anything that has the meaning of the word 'self,' and is free of anything that ought to be called 'self.' This is the meaning of *suññatā*. This single characteristic of voidness gathers together and caps the previous three characteristics.

The meaning of 'suññata' is better, broader, easier, and more useful than any other word to take as a principle of practice and life, but only if we understand it on the Dhamma level, in the language of *sati-paññā* (mindfulness and wisdom). It should not be misunderstood through materialistic interpretations, such as 'nothing exists' or that 'all is a void.' The Buddha pointed out

that such nihilist views are one extreme of wrong understanding. *Suññatā* isn't nihilism or a nothingness. All things exist, yet are void and free of anything that could be called 'self.' Thus we say that everything is void, which is the meaning of 'voidness' in the language of Dhamma. If we see voidness, it includes seeing *aniccam*, *dukkham*, and *anattā* also. We don't need too many things, the three can be untidy. Just one – voidness – is enough to prevent the mental defilements.⁹

When we see voidness in the things that we love, we don't love. When we see voidness in the things we hate, we don't hate. Consequently, there's no love and no hate, no liking and no disliking, no happiness (*sukha*) and no *dukkha*. There is just centeredness, living quietly and freely in the middle. Such is the fruit of truly seeing the voidness of things. If we don't see the voidness of all things, we will love some things and hate others. While love and hatred remain, the mind is enslaved by attachment to the things loved and hated. With full penetration of *suññatā*, the mind is free and no longer a slave to those things. True freedom is voidness.

Suññatā is a synonym of *Nibbāna*. *Nibbāna* is supreme voidness. When the mind realizes voidness, there are no defilements. When there are no defilements, there is no heat. When there is no heat, there is *Nibbāna*, which means 'coolness.' Thus, when there is *suññatā*, there is coolness, *Nibbāna*. Lord Buddha said, "You should always view the world as something void of *attā* (self) and *attaniya* (belonging to self)." This is the second aspect of *paññā*.¹⁰

⁹ *Kilesa*: disruptions and contaminations of the mind's natural peacefulness and radiance. They are discussed in Chapter III.

¹⁰ For more on *suññatā*, see Ajahn Buddhadasa's *Heartwood of the Bodhi Tree* (Wisdom Publications, Somerville, MA: 1994).

The Law of Nature

The third topic I'd like to mention is conditionality (*idappaccayatā*), which means:

*Because this is, this is; because this arises, this arises;
because this is not, this is not; because this quenches,
this quenches.*

These conditions are called 'idappaccayatā,' the law that things happen according to causes and conditions. We can also call it dependent co-arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*) because *idappaccayatā* and *paṭicca-samuppāda* are the same thing, the same principle of wisdom to be studied, seen, and understood. You will see that everything in the world is constantly flowing, that all the world is in continual flux. It is a profound and complex matter. Many books treat it in great detail, particularly when it's described in terms of dependent co-arising. As we don't have much time today, you may need to consult some of those books.¹¹

Thusness

Now, we come to the fourth and last topic: *tathatā* (suchness, thusness). 'Merely thus,' 'just such': everything is such as it is and in no way different from that thusness. This is called 'tathatā.' When *tathatā* is seen, the three characteristics of *aniccam*, *dukkham*, and *anattā* are seen, *suññatā* is seen, and *idappaccayatā* is seen. *Tathatā* is the summary of them all – merely thus, only thus, not-otherness. There is nothing better than this, more than this, other than this, thusness. To intuitively realize *tathatā* is to see the truth of all things, to see the reality of the things which have deceived us. The things which delude us are all the things which cause discrimination and duality to arise in us: good-

¹¹ See Ajahn Buddhadāsa's *Practical Dependent Origination* (Dhamma Study & Practice Group, Bangkok: 1992) and *Under the Bodhi Tree: Buddha's Original Vision of Dependent co-Arising* (Wisdom Publications, Somerville, MA: 2017).

evil, happiness-sadness, win-lose, love-hate, etc. There are many pairs of opposites in this world. By not seeing tathatā, we allow these things to trick us into believing in duality: this-that, liking-disliking, hot-cold, male-female, defiled-enlightened. This delusion causes all our problems. Trapped in these oppositions, we can't see the truth of things. We fall into liking and disliking, which in turn leads to the defilements, because we don't see tathatā.

What we must see constantly and deeply is that good is a saṅkhāra and that evil is a saṅkhāra too. The pleasant and unpleasant feelings, sukha and dukkha, are both saṅkhāra. Getting and disappearing, losing and winning all are saṅkhāra. There isn't anything which isn't a saṅkhāra. Thus, all things are the same – tathatā. All things are just suchness, just this way, not otherwise. Further, we can say that heaven is a saṅkhāra and hell is a saṅkhāra. So heaven and hell are tathatā – just thus. Our minds should be above heaven and above hell, above good and above bad, above joy and above dukkha in all respects. Tathatā is the fourth area of understanding or paññā, the wisdom that must be developed to a sufficient degree. We must study reality on both the physical-material level and on the mental-spiritual level, until our knowledge and wisdom is adequate, natural, and constant.

Now we know these four dhammas: sati, sampajañña, samādhi, and paññā. Next, we must know how to apply them so that they will be correct, successful, and beneficial. The question, now, is how to use Dhamma, or Buddhism, in our everyday lives.

Everyday Use

How are we going to use them in our daily reality? A quick answer is that we must live through these four *dhammas*. We must use these four dhammas correctly to face all the situations and problems that arise each day. Whenever there arises a situation

which can lead to problems or dukkha – such as the eyes seeing a form, the ears hearing a sound, or the mind thinking a thought – we must have *sati*. Sati realizes that something is happening and recalls the *paññā* relevant to that event. Sati immediately transports the necessary wisdom to that situation in time to deal with any possible problems. Mindfulness comes first.

That wisdom applied to the experience is *sampajañña*. Delivered on time by *sati*, wisdom-in-action deals with the immediate situation. Then, in the very moment when *sampajañña* goes to work, the power and strength of *samādhi* gives force and energy to wisdom so that it can cut through the problem. To the degree that there is *samādhi*, to that degree wisdom-in-action will be able to solve the problem. *Paññā* acts as the warehouse of accumulated knowledge and insight which *sati* draws upon to deal with the sense experiences.

When these four dhammas work together in this way, we'll see that we are most intelligent in that moment. We are so clever because we're able to encounter the situation right then and there without any problems arising. We don't become enslaved to the meanings of any of the pairs of opposites. This is the liberated life, which is peaceful and cool. It's the best thing human beings ought to get.

To summarize, we must have sufficient *paññā*, must use *sati* at all times, must apply *sampajañña* correctly and sufficiently, and must apply *samādhi* properly and in adequate strength. Together these four dhammas are sufficiently and correctly used in every situation that may arise with us. This is the answer to the question: how do we use Dhamma successfully?

I hope that each of you will try to use these four dhammas in your lives. Nothing else will justify the time, effort, and expense which you have spent in coming here. I hope that you don't leave here in debt, but that you make a profit out of your stay.

III

New Life: *Your Fruits of Dhamma Practice*

(February 11, 1986)

I would like to express my delight in having a third opportunity to speak with you. In the first talk, we spoke about the way to study Dhamma. In the second talk, we spoke of how to practice Dhamma. Today, we will speak about the fruits and benefits of practicing Dhamma.

When we speak of the benefits of practicing Dhamma, we can divide them into two categories: first, a happy life free of problems, and second, the ability to use that life in the most successful and productive way according to our needs. Put another way, the two kinds of benefits are happiness and the appropriate use of that happiness for our needs. Together they can be called ‘new life.’ We receive new life from practicing Dhamma.

We will begin with the first benefit, the happy life free of problems. You must recollect, observe, and see the fact that this on-going process of life follows our instincts and proceeds under the power of these instincts, which we are unable to control. Because they are out of control, the instincts lead to things called ‘defilements’ (*kilesa*).¹² Before going further, we ought to examine

¹² *Kilesa* is usually translated ‘defilement.’ We use it both in a general sense, covering all the aspects and levels of things which dirty, pollute, or tarnish the mind, and in a specific sense, limited to the most noticeable aspect of defilement, the selfish thoughts and emotions such as lust, anger, fear, worry, laziness, and envy.

the defilements until they're understood clearly, for they are bound up with all spiritual disease.

Defiled Control

When defilements arise, this life – in the language of Dhamma – is sorrowful, that is, *dukkha*. We have experienced over and over again the kind of *dukkha* that we're discussing. We've become so familiar with it that most of us consider it normal; we don't even think it's a problem! Let's learn to distinguish the difference between two kinds of life: life when the defilements are in control and possession, and life when the defilements aren't running the show. We must understand both kinds of life. If you are unable to see and understand the defilements, it will be very difficult, if not impossible, for you to practice and benefit from Dhamma. You won't know how to compare the life of defilement with a life free of defilement and see how different the two are. This is why I request that you try to understand the defilements as they arise in your own lives, even if they annoy you in the process. Study them and get to know them as they arise within you. The more deeply and completely you know them, as your insight into them grows, to that degree and no other, you will understand Dhamma and be able to benefit by Dhamma.

Deluded Obstructions

The first *nīvaraṇa*, sensuousness (*kāmachanda*), is of the greed type and the second, aversion (*vyāpāda*), is of the anger type. The remaining three are of the delusion type. The third *nīvaraṇa* is sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*), when the mind lacks energy and is weak, tired, groggy, numb, drowsy, or stupefied. When the mind is low in energy it lacks clarity, freshness, brightness, and alertness. There are many symptoms of the dull, shrunken, lazy mind that can be summarized as the lack of mental energy. This

includes the dullness and sleepiness that follows from overeating. Hindered by *thīna-middha* (sloth and torpor), it is difficult to think, reflect, listen, meditate, or do anything.

The fourth *nīvaraṇa* is the opposite of the third. This hindrance, busyness and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*), is the agitation and distraction when the mind goes beyond its limits and is out-of-control. We can see it as a kind of nervous disorder. In your attempts to meditate, I'm sure that you have all come across this out-of-control mental activity. An example of restlessness and agitation is the inability to sleep at night because the mind won't slow down, won't rest and relax, but scatters itself in all directions thinking this, thinking that, thinking anything, thinking everything. Such unnecessary agitation doesn't allow the mind to get the rest and peace it needs. When the mind keeps running all over the world, keeps getting involved in everything, it is impossible to perform even a simple task like writing a letter.

Now we've come to the last *nīvaraṇa*, doubt (*vicikicchā*), wavering and uncertainty. *Vicikicchā* is uncertainty and doubt concerning the correctness and safety of things. It is being unsure about what is truly correct and safe. We lack confidence and trust in what is happening and what we're doing. Those who follow a religion that takes faith as the basic principle, faith in God or whatever, seldom have a problem with this hindrance. Those of us who follow a religion based in self-confidence, however, encounter doubt much more easily.

This uncertainty, non-belief, trustlessness, and doubt is about what one is, what one has, and what one is doing. For example, we may have doubts about our health, our economic situation, or even our personal safety. We may have doubts about the things we're involved with: 'Is it right and proper? Is it safe? Can I depend on it?' This doubt may often have to do with everyday concerns, but it can arise toward Dhamma (natural truth)

as well. ‘Is it really true? Is it of any use?’ You might even doubt that there is such a thing as truth, have doubts about the way to realize truth, or lack confidence in your potential for awakening. If uncertainty about everyday things hinders us from using them correctly, how much more so when the doubt is about Dhamma. If we think, ‘What if it’s just words? How can I know it’s true? This isn’t taught at university,’ then we won’t be able to take advantage of and benefit by the Dhamma.

For Christians, vicikicchā may be regarding God, the Bible, or Jesus Christ. For Buddhists, doubt may concern the Buddha, the Scriptures, the Dhamma, or practice. When one has even the slightest doubt that everything is correct and that life is safe, then one is under the influence of this *nīvaraṇa*. Take a good, deep look inside and see that vicikicchā might exist in our subconscious all the time.

Unobstructed Life

Together these five things are called the ‘*nīvaraṇa*.’ How is the mind when it is free of the *nīvaraṇas*? If the mind is free of all five hindrances, how is our mental life? Study this mind and know what it is like. Can we call such a life ‘new life’?

Here, freedom from the *nīvaraṇa* is called ‘new life.’ Further, new life ought to be free of the *kilesa* as well. Half-formed defilements are called ‘*nīvaraṇa*.’ Fully developed defilements are called ‘*kilesa*.’ To be new life, it must be free from the *kilesas*, too. We must now consider the *kilesas* in some detail. They can be known easily by the symptoms of the influence they have on the mind. These can be experienced easily and known clearly. It isn’t necessary, however, to know all the tiny details of the defilements. We just need to know the main symptoms. With electricity, we may not see the electricity itself and we may not understand it, but we can see its power, its influence, and its symptoms through

various electrical appliances and equipment. Similarly, we may never see the defilements themselves, but we can learn all we need to know from their symptoms, from the influence they have on the mind. Their symptoms are many and varied, but we don't have to discuss them all. We will talk about the most important ones, the ones that cause the most trouble in our lives.

Troublesome Love

The first of these troublesome symptoms is love. When love arises in the mind, is anything lost? Is there something the mind must suffer and endure? Does it pick up any burdens or loads? I'm sure that each of us can understand this phenomenon, as all of us have had some experience with this thing called 'love.' Previously, we mentioned the meaning of *rogā*, a synonym for kilesa, as 'something that pierces and stabs.' Does love pierce? Does love stab? To know the answer, we need not look anywhere but within our own experience. So look and see for yourself. Other meanings of defilements are 'things that burn'; 'things that bind, fetter, and chain'; and 'things that dominate and imprison.' Do any of these meanings fit with the thing we call 'love'? You ought to see whether it is a problem or not. Although many people consider love to be bliss, from the Dhamma point of view it is utter lack of calmness, that is, supreme disturbance. Examine it closely and realize for yourself whether or not love causes problems. Don't take our word for it, but don't believe all of the romantic propaganda of TV, novels, and pop music, either.

Ordinarily, the thing we call 'love' is conditioned out of ignorance (*avijjā*, not-knowing), the ultimate defilement. Although there may, only in certain situations, arise a kind of love that comes from wisdom or is governed by it, as soon as it is the mind of 'love,' it becomes a problem. It is no longer peaceful or joyful. Just by labeling it 'love,' it changes from

wisdom to ignorance. The terrible dilemma of love developed from the instinct to preserve the species and reproduce. Take a good look at its effects. Can you see all the problems it causes and the torments through which it drags us? Is it a burden? Is it an obstacle to peace, purity, and joy? At the same time, consider how well off we would be if free of this problem. Even non-sexual love, such as the love of our children, parents, and friends, causes us problems by destroying tranquility and happiness. Non-sexual love must be controlled just as much as sexual love. Otherwise, there is no peace. If we said, 'Do everything as a lover would do, but do it without love,' would you believe that it is possible? Could you act in such a way without any defilement?

There are kinds of love which are Dhamma, such as *mettā* (friendliness, kindness) and *karuṇā* (compassion). Still, they must be correct if problems are to be avoided. *Mettā* and *karuṇā* can be defiled by distinctions, discriminations, and attachment, in which case they become *dukkha*, distressing. Not being able to love and not being able to love what we want to love are problems, are *dukkha*. All these are wrong. Even the love that isn't directly defiled, love that has nothing to do with sex or sensuality, may be defiled indirectly when contaminated by ego and selfishness. Even the higher forms of love, such as *mettā* and *karuṇā*, must be correct.

In short, love is a problem, it isn't peacefulness and joy. It must be regulated, or, if possible, abandoned. Then the mind will not be disordered. We must transform defiled-love into Dhamma-love. A life that can master love, that is above its influence, should we call that 'new life'? I'm sure that each of you can find the answer.

Anger & Hatred

Now we'll talk about love's opposite: anger or ill-will. When it

arises, what is it like? For one, it's another kind of fire that burns the mind. It stabs, imprisons, dominates, and fetters the mind. We all know anger very well; we know the many problems it causes. We don't want to get angry, yet we do. We don't want to be angry, yet we remain so. You know how disturbing anger is. If we can control it, how peaceful will that be? Ponder this, please.

The third defilement is hatred, which is different from anger, although both are forms of dislike or not-liking. When something ugly, dirty, or repulsive appears, we hate it. We can't control ourselves, we just hate unattractive, hateful things. That's how it is, because we can't endure the cause of the hatred. Thus, hatred burns, possesses, and torments our mind. Now, think what it would be like if there was nothing to hate and nothing to love. No love and no hate – what blissful peace that would be! Just like the *arahant* (the perfected human being). The arahant is above the feelings of both hate and non-hate. The liberated mind has no problems with 'hateful' or 'ugly' things because there is nothing hateful and nothing not-hateful for that mind which totally fulfills Dhamma by fully realizing Dhamma. Don't misunderstand that it is dangerous to be free of hate, that we need hatred to protect ourselves from danger. Hatred itself is the danger! It's best not to hate, but we never seem to learn. Thus pitiful instances of hate continue in our world. White-skinned people hate black-skinned people. What's the excuse for such a problem? We shouldn't have problems like that. If we understand correctly, there will be no need to hate, and we won't hate.

Fear of Life

The fourth defilement is fear. Everyone is having this problem; we're all afraid of something. Fear comes from stupidity, from selfishness, from the craving of a self that desires things it can't have. So we fear! Nowadays, we have every possible kind of

fear in this world of ours, especially the fear of nuclear war and annihilation. When we're afraid, we become helpless. When there is fear, we lose our mindfulness and wisdom (*sati-paññā*), and our ability to struggle with problems and protect ourselves. To be unafraid is much better.

Fear comes from the instinct of egoism. It is an instinctual necessity. When there is insufficient knowledge and wisdom, this instinct is impossible to control. Through the study and practice of Dhamma, necessary and sufficient wisdom is developed so that this instinct can be controlled and fear does not arise. Understanding and insight into *anattā* (not-self) allows us to be free of fear, helps us to uproot fear, and protects us from its future arising. All of you surely can see that fear has no use at all, that it always leads to dukkha. We ought to be able to do anything in the face of fearful and frightening things. Then we will be in a much better position to deal with those things and succeed in the business of living. If we must fight with an enemy, but cannot do it without fear, we are in no position to fight effectively. Our abilities will be weakened, our wisdom will be diminished, and our mindfulness will be slow. We will be defeated by whatever foe it is. Unafraid, however, we are able to use our wisdom, mindfulness, and skills in the degree needed to defeat that enemy. Face all frightening things fearlessly. A fearless life is of great use.

Positive Defilements

There are many other forms of *kilesa*. Another is worry and anxiety about the things we love. In Thai and Pāli this is called '*ālaya-āvaraṇa*,' the anxious worrying and thinking about, longing after, dwelling upon, and missing of things we love. This is that spinning around of the mind when it can't stop thinking of beloved things. If the mind can't stop, this keeps it awake at night and causes headaches during the day.

Another kilesa is envy. This happens instinctually on its own. It happens in children without their being taught. Envy is a huge problem for the one who feels it, but it isn't any problem for its object. The first feels dukkha, the latter doesn't.

Finally, we come to possessiveness and miserliness. If this grows too strong, it becomes jealousy, especially the sexual kind. This is yet another form of selfishness. It often takes place in marriages. The husband doesn't want his wife to talk with other men; the wife jealously worries that another woman will steal her husband away. We are all familiar with that pain and suffering.

These are six examples of defilements. There are many more which we could bring up, but we are limited by time. Nonetheless, these few examples are enough to illustrate our point: if we are free of every symptom and condition of defilement, how healthy, well, at ease, happy, and peaceful will we be? It's up to you to discover what this is like, yet even now you ought to be able to imagine its value. The mind that is totally free from all symptoms of these defilements is a totally new way of living. This peace and freedom, this coolness and bliss, is one meaning of new life.

Making Use of New Life

Next, we'll discuss a second meaning of new life. We must be able to skillfully use this new way of existing – that comes with freedom from defilements – to meet our needs. The first aspect of applying the new life is making the mind joyful at any time. For example, through successfully practicing mindfulness with breathing (*ānāpānasati*), it is possible to have genuine happiness at any time, in any place. Because of the proper development of mindfulness with breathing, we have influence and mastery over the mind. We have instant happiness as we need it.

This second aspect of using the new life is that fully practiced Dhamma can help the sense organs – eyes, ears, nose,

tongue, body, and mind – to perform most efficiently, as if they were ‘divine.’¹³ By this we mean only that they have more ability and effectiveness than is ordinary. The eyes are more effective than ordinary, the ears are more efficient than ordinary, the nose and so on are more capable than ordinary, as if they were ‘divine.’ Divine (*dibba*) simply means ‘beyond ordinary.’

Mastering Experience

A third aspect of new life is the ability to control experience, that is, the mind, so that it is always in a state of correctness. This type of mastery has three aspects: regulating the *vedanā* (feelings), regulating *saññā* (perceptions, recognitions, classifications), and regulating *vitakka* (thinking). Mastery of *vedanās* means preventing them from conditioning defilements, as well as not experiencing any unwanted feelings.¹⁴ *Saññā* – recognizing, evaluating, classifying things as this or that – can be controlled so that it doesn’t lead to *dukkha*. Controlling *vitakka* (thought conception) is to control the thinking so that either it is correct or there is no thinking at all. Feelings, perceptions, and thinking can be mastered because there is Dhamma.

Eating delicious food provides an example of the first kind of mastery. If the food is delicious, we become stupid or crazy over it through our delusion about deliciousness. When there is enough Dhamma, we can control the feelings that arise toward that delicious food. Then, we aren’t deluded by the deliciousness, we don’t eat more than we should, and we don’t make any problems out of it. We see it all as ‘just thus, merely thus,’ rather than with foolishness and delusion. The delicious food doesn’t defeat us, it isn’t our boss, and it doesn’t make us do anything stupid. We don’t

¹³ Divine Eye and Divine Ear are believed to be results of highly perfected mental concentration (*samādhi*). They’re commonly viewed to be magical, and the foolish may meditate solely to gain these powers.

¹⁴ Please note that feeling (*vedanā*), here, does not mean ‘emotions.’

force it to be not delicious. If it's delicious, it stays delicious, but the deliciousness can't control us. We control the deliciousness so that it doesn't force us to do something wrong or foolish.

We can see most easily that people throughout the world today are slaves to deliciousness. Much time is spent making delicious things which serve no other purpose than to excite desire and craving. Then, we compete for those things. Finally, we divide up the world in attempts to control those things and fight endless wars, only because we have lost control of and are slaves to deliciousness. The words 'Satan' (the Christian Devil) and 'Māra' (the Buddhist Tempter) represent our stupidity regarding deliciousness. We need to know that the feelings (*vedanās*) can be managed.

Now let's talk about the control of *saññā* (recognition, classification). Previously, we couldn't remember things well or recall them correctly. From now on, we'll have an excellent memory and clear recollection. Through the mastery of *saññā*, mind won't fall into false distinctions and misperceptions, that is, the ones that punish us with *dukkha*. For example, *saññā* can be controlled so that we don't identify and regard things as being male and being female. Thereby, we're free of the problems that arise from masculinity and femininity. The mind remains cool and calm. Mastery of *saññā* means controlling it so that it is always correct. Correct means that it causes no *dukkha*.

Controlling *vitakka* is to control thought. Whenever there is *saññā* of something, it invites thinking according to the meaning of that *saññā*. So we think; and we think a lot. If it isn't controlled, the thinking goes wrong and *dukkha* is born. Thought is skillful when kept to ways that are correct and beneficial: thinking along the lines of leaving behind sensuality, of not harming or injuring others, and of not troubling anyone, even unintentionally. If we want more than that, we can stop thinking altogether. For example,

if we will enter *samādhi* (focused non-distraction) or *samāpatti* (attainment of deep levels of concentration), we can stop the thinking totally, in all respects. We are able to control vitakka, that is, we can think when we wish to do so and not think when we wish not to. Or we can think only in the ways we ought to think. Then, nothing wrong happens and there is no dukkha. This is what is meant by mastering vitakka.

Removing the Womb of Defilement

A fourth, and final, aspect of this mental mastery is the direct control of the defilements themselves, which is to control dukkha and prevent its arising. When there is enough Dhamma, and when Dhamma is practiced sufficiently, clinging (*upādāna*) can be controlled. This control prevents attachment to ‘good’ and attachment to ‘evil.’ With no attachment or clinging, there is no dukkha. We won’t let *upādāna* arise, and then the concept of ‘I’ (egoism), which is the womb of defilements, isn’t born. Without the concept of ‘I,’ there will be no defilements. Once the defilements can be controlled, they are finished. This is the last good result, a fourth kind of mastery, the control of clinging, which automatically controls dukkha.

In these ways, life is mastered and used wisely, so that we reap all the appropriate benefits. Such is the new life of peace, coolness, and bliss. For example, we have the ability to be happy whenever we need to be. We have such splendid sense organs – eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind-sense – that they can be called ‘divine.’ Then we can control the feelings, perceptions, and thinking. Finally, we control clinging so that it never again arises. Thereby, all problems vanish! There isn’t even the slightest, most remote chance that the defilements will arise or that there could be dukkha. With these capabilities, life is maintained in the most skillful way, and we accomplish whatever must be done.

If you look honestly, you'll know within yourself that this is the new life in its complete meaning: the highest, supremely new life. This is what you'll receive from the correct and successful application of Dhamma.

The first thing is for you to study Dhamma, the second is for you to practice Dhamma, and the third is for you to receive the fruits of practicing Dhamma. Look at these clearly and carefully consider their benefits. Each of you must be fully self-reliant in doing so. It's up to each of you to realize the meaning, way, and benefits of practicing Dhamma.

Thank you

Finally, I'd like to express my joy that you have begun to study, practice, and receive the Dhamma. And one last time: thank you. Thank you all for coming to this place, for making use of it, and helping to make it beneficial. You don't have to thank us for anything, but please allow us to thank you.



Afterword

The talks which comprise this book were the first of many series of talks Ajahn Buddhādāsa gave during the monthly meditation courses held at Suan Mokkh over the last nine years of his life. Subsequently, the themes of these three talks were expanded upon in greater detail. Recordings of most of these talks, as well as transcripts, are now available on-line at www.suanmokkh.org. As we are able, these will be edited for future publication. For more on the subject of Spiritual Disease, see *Heartwood of the Bodhi Tree: The Buddha's Teaching on Voidness* (Wisdom Publications, Somerville, MA: 1995).

For more about mindfulness with breathing (*ānāpānasati*), the system of meditation generally taught at Suan Mokkh, see *Mindfulness with Breathing: a Manual for Serious Beginners* (Wisdom Publications, Somerville, MA: 1996).

Glossary

A guide to Ajahn Buddhādāsa's use of terms

Anattā, not-self, the fact that all things, without exception and including Nibbāna, are not-self and lack any essence or substance that could properly be regarded as a 'self.' This fact does not deny the existence of things. Rather, this insight realizes that nothing can be owned or controlled, nor be the owner or controller, in any but a relative, conventional sense. Its purpose is practical rather than ideological.

Aniccaṃ, impermanent, not-lasting, transient (or *aniccatā*, impermanence, flux, instability). Conditioned things are ever-changing, constantly arising, manifesting, and ceasing. This is the first fundamental characteristic of conditioned things.

Anusaya, tendencies: familiarity with defilement. When a defilement occurs, it makes the later occurrence of a similar defilement more likely. The more these underlying tendencies build up, the more we react to experiences in defiled ways. Sometimes the pressure is strong enough for something to escape even without an external provocation, that something is called a '*nīvaraṇa*.'

Arahant, worthy one, one far from defilement, one who has broken the wheel of birth and death, one without secrets: the mind totally and finally free of greed, anger, and delusion; void

of 'I' and 'mine'; which has ended *kamma*; which is unaffected by *dukkha*. The *arahant* should not be regarded as a 'person' or 'individual.'

Ārammaṇa, sense objects: sensible phenomena discriminated and perched upon by sense consciousness (*viññāṇa*), which thus establishes itself.

Ariya-sacca, noble truth, ennobling realities: truth which frees one from all enemies (*ari*), namely, defilements and *dukkha*. Usually expressed in the fourfold formula: the fact that *dukkha* happens; the truth that there is an origin of *dukkha*, namely, *taṇhā* (craving); the truth of the quenching of *dukkha*, by quenching craving; and the truth of the practice leading to the quenching of *dukkha*. Although the traditional formula is fourfold, "Truth is but One, there is no second."

Attā, 'self,' ego, substantial soul, [Sanskrit, *ātman*]: the instinctual feeling (and illusion) that there is some 'I' who does all the things to be done in life. Through ignorance and wrong understanding this instinctual sensibility is identified with and becomes 'ego.' No personal, independent, self-existing, free-willing, lasting substance or essence can be found anywhere, whether within or without human life and experience, not even in 'God.' (Cf. *anattā*, *idappaccayatā*, and *suññata*.)

Avijjā, ignorance, not-knowing, wrong knowledge: the lack, partial or total, of *vijjā* (correct knowledge) regarding the things that need to be known (e.g., the four noble truths, *suññata*, *tathatā*), as well as knowing things in the wrong way, i.e., as

permanent, satisfying, and self. The most original cause of all *dukkha*. Without Dhamma practice, ignorance grows into increasingly wrong knowledge.

Ānāpānasati, mindfulness with breathing in and out: the only meditation or *vipassanā* system practiced and taught by the Buddha, it covers all four foundations of mindfulness and perfects the seven factors of awakening, leading to liberation. Ajahn Buddhadasa considers it the best way to realize *suññata*.

Citta, mind, heart, psyche: that which thinks, knows, and experiences. In a more limited sense, citta is what ‘thinks,’ can be defiled by *kilesa*, can be developed, and can realize Nibbāna. Although we cannot know citta directly, it is where all Dhamma practice occurs.

Dhamma, thing, phenomenon, nature, natural thing, virtue: all things, mental and physical, conditioned and unconditioned, are dhammas.

Dhamma, truth, nature, law, natural truth, duty, order, ‘the way things are’: this impossible to translate word has many meanings, the most important of which are nature, the law of nature, our duty according to natural law, and the fruits of doing that duty correctly according to natural law. (See *paṭicca-samuppāda*.) Also, teachings pointing to Dhamma.

Dukkha, distress, anguish, suffering, misery, ill-being (or *dukkhatā*, unsatisfactoriness, imperfection): the spiritual dilemma of human beings. Etymologically, *dukkha* can be translated

‘hard to endure, difficult to bear’; ‘once seen, it is ugly’; and ‘horribly, wickedly void.’ In its experiential sense, *dukkha* is the quality of experience that results when the mind is concocted by *avijjā* into craving, clinging, egoism, and selfishness. This feeling takes on many forms – from the crudest to the most subtle levels – such as disappointment, dissatisfaction, frustration, agitation, dis-ease, and despair. In its universal sense, *dukkhatā* is the inherent condition of unsatisfactoriness, imperfection, and undependableness in all impermanent, conditioned things (*sankhāra*). To fully understand the meaning of *dukkha*, one must realize that *sukha* (happiness, bliss) is also *dukkha*. Nibbāna (i.e. *suññata*) is the only thing which is not *dukkhatā*.

Idappaccayatā, conditionality: everything is conditioned by and depends upon other conditioned things. This applies to how things arise and how they fall apart. Ajahn Buddhadasa considered it to be the ‘Buddhist God.’

Khandha, aggregates, groups, bundles: the five subsystems or basic functions which constitute the human being. These groups are not entities in themselves; they are merely categories into which the functional aspects of our lives can be analyzed. None of them are ‘self,’ ‘of self,’ ‘in self,’ or ‘my self’; they have nothing to do with ‘selfhood’ and there is no ‘self’ apart from them. When they cling or are clung to, the five are known as the *upādāna-khandha* (aggregates of clinging, clinging together bundles). The five are:

rūpa-khandha, form-aggregate, particularly the body, its nervous system, sense receptors, and sense inputs (the world);

vedanā-khandha, feeling-aggregate: the dimension of

pleasure and pain accompanying almost all experience;
saññā-khandha, recognition-aggregate: the discrimination, labelling, and evaluation of sense experience;
saṅkhāra-khandha, thought-aggregate: thought processes and emotions, including volition, desire, attachment, and ‘birth’;
viññāṇa-khandha, consciousness-aggregate: the basic knowing that distinguishes something within each of the sensory fields (visual, auditory, etc.), creating a sense ‘object.’

Karuṇā, compassion: wanting to help due to awareness and understanding of dukkha, both one’s own and that of others. One of the ‘divine dwellings’ through which we outgrow egoism.

Kilesa, defilements, impurities: the harmful thoughts and emotions that tarnish, dirty, and pollute mind. These reactive passions are merely passing clouds that obscure mind’s natural luminosity. While the three primary categories of *kilesa* are greed, hatred, and delusion, they proliferate with endless creativity.

Manussa, human being, high-minded being: a mind above the ebb and flow of worldly conditions.

Nibbāna, coolness, quenching: the Supreme, the ultimate reality in Buddhism; the purpose and meaning (*attha*) of Buddhist practice and highest potential of humanity. Nibbāna manifests when the fires of craving, clinging, defilement, and selfishness are cooled. When they are thoroughly cooled, Nibbāna manifests perfectly, totally, timelessly. Not a place, for Nibbāna is beyond

existence and non-existence, not even a state of mind, for Nibbāna is neither mental nor physical, but a *dhamma* the mind can realize and experience in this life.

Nīvaraṇa, hindrances, obstacles: disturbing moods and mental qualities which interfere with the mind's task, whether worldly or spiritual. Half-strength defilements, they arise from the tendencies toward defilement built up through carelessness and need not be triggered by outside objects. To overcome them, correct *samādhi* is needed. The traditional list of five are sensuousness, aversion, sloth and torpor, restlessness and distraction, and doubt.

Paññā, wisdom, penetrating insight, intuitive understanding: correct seeing, knowing, and understanding of the things we must know in order to quench *dukkha*, namely, the four noble truths, the three characteristics, dependent origination, and voidness. The various terms used for 'knowing' are not meant to express an intellectual activity, although the intellect has its role. The emphasis is on direct, intuitive, non-conceptual comprehending of life as it is here and now. Memory, language, and thought are not required. Buddhist tradition considers *paññā* to be its characteristic quality rather than faith or will-power.

Paṭicca-samuppāda, dependent co-arising: the profound and detailed process of conditions that concoct *dukkha*. Due to ignorance, and dependent on sense organ and sense object, there arises consciousness (*viññāṇa*). These three things working together are contact (*phassa*). Upon this ignorant contact, there arises feeling (*vedanā*), craving (*taṇhā*), clinging (*upādāna*), becoming (*bhava*), birth (*jāti*), decay and death (*jarā-maraṇa*), and all the forms of *dukkha*.

Phassa, the meeting and working together of sense organ, sense object, and sense consciousness (*viññāṇa*). When a sensual stimulus makes enough of an impact upon awareness – that is, has ‘meaning’ – to draw a response, either ignorant or wise, beginning with *vedanā*.

Sampajañña, wisdom-in-action, functional wisdom, ready comprehension, clear comprehension. While *paññā* (wisdom) is developed, or ‘stored up,’ through introspection and insight, *sampajañña* is the immediate and specific application of wisdom to, and into, a particular situation or experience. While *paññā* understands that ‘everything is empty free of self-existence,’ *sampajañña* understands that ‘there is no self in this.’ All understanding relies on mindfulness for its appearance, recall, and application.

Samādhi, concentration, collectedness, unification of mind: gathering together of the mental flow and secure establishment of mind. Proper *samādhi* has the qualities of purity, clarity, stability, calmness, readiness, and gentleness. Its primary characteristic is non-distraction. The supreme *samādhi* is the singleness of mind (*ekaggatā-citta*) that has Nibbāna as its sole concern. In a broader sense, *samādhi* can be translated ‘meditation,’ meaning development of the mind through the power of *samādhi*.

Saṅkhāra, concoction, conditioned thing, fabrication; concocting, compounding, conditioning. As a verb, *saṅkhāra* is the endless activity of concocting and change in which new things arise, manifest, and cease. As a noun, *saṅkhāra* are transient, created things acting both as the products of the concocting and the causes of ever new concoctions.

Saññā, recognition, classification, evaluation, perception: once mind has made contact (*phassa*) with a sense object and then feels it (*vedanā*), e.g., as pleasant, a concept, label, or image is attached to the experience. *Saññā* involves recognizing similarities with past experience and discriminating the value of the object.

Sati, mindfulness, attention, awareness, recall, recollection: mind's ability to notice and observe what it's doing and feeling, and how it's reacting. *Sati* is the vehicle and transport mechanism for *paññā*; without *sati*, wisdom cannot be developed, retrieved, or applied. *Sati* allows us to be aware of what we are about to do and is characterized by speed and agility.

Sati-paññā, mindfulness and wisdom: *sati* and *paññā* must work together. *Paññā* depends on *sati*, arising through mindfulness of life's experiences and applied to present experience through mindfulness. Without sufficient wisdom, mindfulness is misused.

Suññata, emptiness, voidness: all phenomena are empty and free of anything that is properly 'me' or 'mine.' Nothing substantial and independent can be found in conditioned phenomena. *Suññata*, is intended as a practical tool for investigating experience and the futility of clinging.

Tathatā, thusness, suchness, just-like-that-ness: neither this nor that, the reality of non-duality and the interdependence of seeming opposites. Things are just as they are (void and dependently originated) regardless of our perceptions, likes and dislikes, suppositions and beliefs, hopes and memories.

Tilakkhaṇa, three characteristics, three marks of existence: inherent features of all conditioned things, namely, the facts of impermanence (*aniccatā*), dukkha-ness (*dukkhatā*), and not-self (*anattatā*).

Upādāna, clinging, attachment, grasping: to hold onto something foolishly, to regard things as ‘I’ and ‘mine,’ to take things personally. Not the things attached to, but the lustful-satisfaction (*chanda-rāga*) regarding them. The Buddha distinguished four kinds of *upādāna*: attachment to sensuality, to views, to precepts and practices, and to words concerning self. (To hold something wisely is *samādāna*, undertaking.)

Vedanā, feeling: the mental response to or affective tone of sense experience (*phassa*), the realm of pleasure and pain. Feeling comes in three forms: pleasant or agreeable (*sukha-vedanā*), unpleasant or painful (*dukkha-vedanā*), and indeterminate, neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant (*adukkhamasukha-vedanā*). *Vedanā* is a mental actor. Sometimes, however, a looser sense of the term is used regarding physical sensations. This primitive activity of mind is not equivalent to far more complex emotion.

Viññāṇa, consciousness: knowing sense objects through the six doors (eyes, ears, etc.). The most basic mental activity required for participation in the sensual world (*loka*); without it there is no subject-object experience.

Vitakka, thought conception, thinking.

Vicāra, experiencing a thought-object or theme.

About the Author

Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu was born in 1906, the son of a southern Thai mother and an ethnic Chinese father. He followed Thai custom by entering a local monastery in 1926, studied for a couple years in Bangkok, and then founded his own refuge for study and practice in 1932. Since then, he has had a profound influence on not only Thai Buddhism but other religions in Siam and Buddhism in the West. Among his more important accomplishments, he:

- Challenged the hegemony of later commentarial texts with the primacy of the Buddha's original discourses.
- Integrated serious Dhamma study, intellectual creativity, and rigorous practice.
- Explained Buddha-Dhamma with an emphasis on this life, including the possibility of experiencing Nibbāna ourselves.
- Softened the dichotomy between householder and monastic practice, stressing that the noble eightfold path is available to everyone.
- Offered doctrinal support for addressing social and environmental issues, helping to foster socially engaged Buddhism in Siam.
- Shaped his forest monastery as an innovative teaching environment and Garden of Liberation.

After a series of illnesses, including strokes, he died in 1993. He was cremated without the usual pomp and expense.

About the Translator

Santikaro went to Thailand with the Peace Corps in 1980, was ordained as a Theravada monk in 1985, trained at Suan Mokkh under Ajahn Buddhādāsa, and became his primary English translator. Santikaro led meditation retreats at Suan Mokkh for many years, and was unofficial abbot of nearby Dawn Kiam. He is a founding member of Think Sangha, a community of socially engaged Buddhist thinker activists that has given special attention to the ethical and spiritual impact of consumerism and other modern developments.

Santikaro returned to the USA's Midwest in 2001 and retired from formal monastic life in 2004. He continues to teach in the Buddhist tradition with an emphasis on the early Pāli sources and the insights of Ajahn Buddhādāsa. He is the founder of Liberation Park, a modern American expression of Buddhist practice, study, and social responsibility in rural Wisconsin. There he continues to study, practice, translate the work of his teacher, teach, and imagine the future of Buddha-Dhamma in the West.

Recommended Reading (Books)

- *Mindfulness With Breathing: A Manual for Serious Beginners*
- *Handbook for Mankind*
- *The First Ten Years of Suan Mokkh*
- *Heartwood of the Bodhi Tree*
- *Keys to Natural Truth*
- *The Prison of Life*
- *Nibbāna for Everyone*
- *Paticcasamuppāda: Practical Dependent Origination*
- *Under the Bodhi Tree: Buddha's Original Vision of Dependent Co-Arising* *

* forthcoming

Online Resources

- www.suanmokkh.org
- www.liberationpark.org
- www.bia.or.th

Buddhadāsa Indapañño Archives

Established in 2010, the Buddhadāsa Indapañño Archives collect, maintain, and present the original works of Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu. Also known as Suan Mokkh Bangkok, it is an innovative place for fostering mutual understanding between traditions, studying and practicing Dhamma.



Liberation Park

Liberation Park is a Dhamma refuge in the USA's Midwest inspired by Suan Mokkh. Here, Santikaro and friends work to nurture a garden of liberation along the lines taught by Ajahn Buddhadāsa, where followers of the Buddha-Dhamma Way can explore Dhamma as Nature and in the Pāli suttas.



“We must learn from life itself. Learn from all the things that you experience within this fathom-long body. Please be certain to learn inside only, and don't bother learning outside. The things that we learn from external sources, such as books and talks, are never enough. Only by looking within can we come to understand these spiritual diseases completely.”

Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu

